

1945

# Religion as Enrichment of Life: Purposeful Living, Cooperative Living, Mystical Wholeness, and Ceremonial Celebration

Edward Scribner Ames

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## Recommended Citation

Ames, Edward Scribner, "Religion as Enrichment of Life: Purposeful Living, Cooperative Living, Mystical Wholeness, and Ceremonial Celebration" (1945). *Stone-Campbell Books*. Book 169.  
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# RELIGION AS ENRICHMENT OF LIFE



Purposeful Living  
Cooperative Living  
Mystical Wholeness  
Ceremonial Celebration



EDWARD SCRIBNER AMES  
University Church of Disciples of Christ  
University Avenue at Fifty-seventh Street,  
Chicago

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Psychology of Religious Experience  
Religion

The New Orthodoxy

Letters to God and the Devil

(These books are one dollar each)

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The Disciples of Christ

Theory and Practice

Religion As the Enrichment of Life

(These pamphlets are ten cents each)



# RELIGION AS ENRICHMENT OF LIFE

## Purposeful Living

Religion is living the best possible life in the midst of mortal ills and limitations. Religious living means expanding horizons, better achievements, and deepening satisfactions. The urge of all life is toward enlargement, with memories from past experience as to how to succeed, and warnings as to ways that fail. The Hebrew commandments were given with the assurance that for those who followed them life would be good and fruitful. Jesus announced that he came to offer a way of abundant life. The three great words of his religion—faith, hope, and love—express this forward drive and confident trust. Faith in life, in nature, is also confidence in God. Hope is expectation of the realization of plans. Love is generous goodwill. Such a life is cooperative and calls forth social organizations as the instruments of the common will; it is intelligent and seeks scientific control of the conditions of the good life, which is wisdom; and it involves the cultivation of art in symbols, ceremonies, and varied appeals to the imagination as means of education and emotional release.

It is natural for man to have a longer perspective and a broader vision than the lower animals. It is a reproach for man to live at the level of the beast. 'Be a man,' is a challenge often made to stir a human being out of baser things into aspiration for larger and finer ends. This higher life, like every good harvest, comes from cultivation and nurture in rich and favorable soil. It comes from appreciation of the long tradition of heroic struggle and search after wisdom and goodness wrought out by many generations in the slow climb of the race. It grows also from great visions of better things to come, for where there is no vision the people perish.

Man is at his best when he lives a large, inclusive life, and is not limited to a narrow existence such as pursuing a single vocation, whether it be making money, searching for pleasure and comfort, striving for knowledge, fame or power. The religious life summons him to know and enjoy nature, to wonder over the events of the day, and to swim in the full stream of life. We deprecate the effects of the new industrialism because it frequently confines men to deadening piece-work, preventing the worker from seeing the whole to which his labor contributes. His mind is stunted by lack of opportunity to share in the total process from the gathering of raw material to the end product and its final use. Religion offers the individual a share and a responsibility in the larger social process and lifts him into consciousness of a great, far moving cause freighted with fair dreams and thrilling destiny.

Religion is sensitive to the value and the well being of every individual and is concerned with every phase of his life. Nothing is foreign to it, health, ambition, knowledge, morality, love, art or recreation. It has regard for the whole body of human interests. It makes life as organic as the body. The body fails if any of its members are neglected. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Religious interest is always concrete, and is always keeping in view the relation of the particular part to the whole. Nothing but the entire life can be an end in itself. Deep disappointment waits for any one who tries to give himself completely to business or profession or art. Man cannot live by bread alone, nor by anything else alone.

Even great social reforms are insufficient by themselves to satisfy when pursued too exclusively. The history of many noble causes when pursued too narrowly reveals the bitterness of failure. Temperance has been at times advocated as if it were a panacea, but life proves to be more than sobriety. Equal suffrage was heralded as the solution of so-



cial ills but now something more is needed. The abolition of war is an object of proper devotion but peace of itself would not bring the millenium. All the world today is in quest of economic security, but riches for all is no guarantee of utopia. Education in America has become practically universal but now there is a growing consciousness that "character education" must be added. Here again there is a dawning awareness that traits of honesty, industry, generosity, and the rest, demand some further integration and motivation.

The Bible is a great religious book because it deals with the whole of life. It sets forth perspectives, fullness of living, inclusive purposes and profound inspirations. An extension of the Bible is needed today to present this wholeness of existence more adequately. It should include modern cosmology to show how vast is the order of nature in its frame of millions of years, and its marvelous distances of light years. If men of old had reason to wonder at the magnificence of creation, we moderns have much better reason for amazement when we follow the knowledge of our geologists and astronomers. There should be new chapters on ethics, retelling in terms of new discoveries the stories of the order and valor of primitive societies; the fidelity of various peoples to their ideas of honor and faith; the heroic devotion of saints and wise men in all nations as they sought to follow the light that lighteth every man born into the world. And there should be new records of the prophecies with which noble souls are burgeoning in their utopian hopes for what may yet be accomplished by science and love for the redemption of the race.

The parables of Jesus illustrate the concern of his religion for all interests of life in relation to a great inclusive conception which he called the kingdom of heaven. He spoke of the farmer's sowing of seed and made it a cosmic matter; he described weddings and classified the virgins by their foresight and folly; he told the tale of a spendthrift prodigal and his return to sanity. He made it clear that the virtues are the attitudes and habits

which bring well being, and that evils are the attitudes and habits which defeat and destroy. The Apostle Paul gave advice about everything, about the duty of working, eating food, drinking, taxes, sports, women's dress and conduct. His idea of the Christian life was that whatever one is doing he ought to do with reference to supreme and inclusive ends.

It is one of the distinctive marks of religion that it holds men to the cultivation of a full orb'd life. Philosophy also deals with the whole of life but in terms of thought and understanding. It does not seek to make it practically operative. Religion undertakes to do something about it and to make the best of it all.

### Cooperative Living

Religion as man's effort to live and enjoy the best possible life is the largest and most significant human enterprise. It follows that men work together for its realization. Even small and commonplace tasks require cooperation. Nothing of consequence is done by the individual alone. The other people and the forces of nature involved in some little job may not be recognized by the worker. He takes them for granted and overlooks them because they may not be present to his eye or ear. The farmer repairing his wire fence may think he works by himself, but a moment's reflection makes it clear that many men wrought to produce the wire and to bring it to market where he bought it. The miner, the mill hands, the truck driver, the merchant, have done their part. Most of the day's labor is done in gangs. Gangs of men pave the roads, fix the street lights, lay the water mains. And back of these workmen are other organizations, business corporations, community officials, political parties. There are unions for every kind of work.

The increase of power that comes through the cooperation of many individuals is more than the multiplication of numbers. Two plus two makes more than four in social enterprises. Two plus two



singers makes a musical quartette which is more than just four musicians. The higher entities organized for social ends multiply efficiency by division of labor. The life religion cultivates is like a temple in process of erection by the combined thought and labor of architects, engineers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, artists, and day laborers, directing their energies to the temple as a whole. In this temple the building stones are human lives and the individuals are as much the concern of the builders as the total structure itself.

A baseball team affords a humble illustration. Each man has his place and a particular part to play, but all his acts are dependent upon and woven into the play of all his team-mates. Each one watches every other and has a quick and sympathetic response ready for any move made. So it is in any field of life. Each of us has his vocation. That is our base, our position in the game. Each is a producer, a consumer, a trader, a mechanic, a doctor, a lawyer, a scientist, a teacher, an artist. Each has to have regard at times for the part played by every other. The function of every one is bound up with his being a member of a community, a citizen, and he must have regard for all, since he may need them at any moment. Religion stresses this sense of the interrelation of all in the common cause. It makes each one significant and gives his life value and meaning. Unfortunately it is often easier to appreciate the importance of an individual when he goes wrong and as a gunman, or betrayer of some trust, wrecks many lives and terrorizes entire communities.

Religion is constantly stressing the qualities needed for cooperation,—mutual interest, sympathy, imagination, love. Encouragement is important for the strong, help for the weak, and good will for all. This is the reason religion concerns itself with social enterprises and cultivates the "social gospel." General education, opposition to war, crime, poverty, and all forms of social injustice, are persistent demands of the religious attitude. The love which fulfills all the law and the



prophets is active, resourceful, and unremitting. It claims its place in the ordering of private life, in community affairs, in business, industry, politics, international relations, and in the pursuit and use of all forms of knowledge and art.

In every cooperative enterprise, from parlor games to world peace, there must be laws, rules of the game, with umpires, judges, and courts of appeal. Religious living has structures, forms, constitutions. These have developed out of long experience and embody the wisdom and the idealism of great leaders and of the common people. They are subject to change through the growth of culture and the development of intelligence and love. Religious geniuses are the great spirits who are sensitive to evils and injustices and who bring denunciations and show ways of improvement. They see life in longer perspectives, with deeper insight, and with urgent will to make things better. Jesus was such a genius. He caught up the best in the tradition of his people and set forth new standards. In place of what had been said by them of old time he spoke many new things. He gave golden rules and inspired men to follow them. His teaching had the authority of experience and men responded to him gladly as to a leader who gave them release from outworn rules and customs. His example has moved other leaders to do the same for later times with the consequence that many revolutions and reformations have continued to mark the path of his religion. This fact is clearer today than ever before and it brings new courage and hope in the effort to advance to better conceptions of life and to find means for their attainment.

Cooperation is often misunderstood with reference to its effect upon the individual. It is sometimes thought of as the regimentation of men into mere conformity to a fixed pattern, as restraint of freedom, as hindrance to growth. But in mutual cooperation the opposite is true. When a man goes into partnership under normal conditions his personality is enlarged and enriched. Marriage is an illustration. Business partnership is another.



Entering school is another. Joining a club is the same. In each case the individual accepts the relationship and works within the rules and arrangements involved, but he gains greater values and becomes a greater person. The better the social system with which he unites, the more individuality he achieves through it. As in a social game that player develops power and prestige who learns from his opponents and thus takes into himself their skill, so in the spiritual relationships cooperation is the means of strength and enrichment. Every difficulty conquered augments power.

Religious living recognizes differences of individuals in station, vocation, endowment, and function but sees them as possible contributions to the whole. We cannot escape differences but we can utilize them. Where persons are associated together in good will on behalf of a common cause their differences may be made contributory to the growth of all parties. This fact has very practical significance for the work and peace of local congregations and for the cause of christian union. But the good will must not be forgotten. Even tennis players and boxers shake hands before and after the events.

## Mystical Wholeness

There are moments when we seem to be "in tune with the infinite," when the tide of life is so full and strong that we forget the distracting cares and all the aching pain. A glorious sunset, the memory of a loved face, the greeting of a friend, the quiet rain on the roof, a gossamer web holding jewels of dew, a strain of an old melody, a star shining in the depth of heaven, may focus the mind and lift the heart into utter peace. Then we are one with life, whole and complete. When it comes with a vision of beauty we call it aesthetic; when it comes with devotion to the best and the greatest things we call it religious.

That which distinguishes religious ecstasy is the importance and the inclusiveness of the experience



from which the ecstasy springs. It is true that narcotics or intoxicants may produce a semblance of spiritual elation but it betrays itself by its failure to yield enduring satisfaction. It cannot justify itself to reflection nor to public opinion. The after taste is disappointing. A lively social game has more substance and objectivity but it too is haunted by a kind of unreality. It remains relatively insignificant and unproductive. It lives in the moment and has its meaning and its value only while it lasts.

Religious living, on the contrary, has greater dimensions. Its roots lie in the deep soil of the past, and it flowers into the future. It gathers into itself the significance and quality of all the stable and rewarding interests of life. It lives with wisdom, the tried and tested wisdom of the seers and saints. The good conscience of useful deeds done and remembered enters into it. Imaginative companionship with heroic and noble souls is implicit in it. Judgment days have no terror and its strength is renewed in the light of day.

Any work man does is encircled by his imagination and his hope. His work is directed toward some end to fulfill some desire, to achieve some satisfaction. He sees the end from the beginning and while he labors to lay the foundations of the house he is already enjoying in anticipation the shelter of its roof and the comfort of its warmth. When many work together to build a house in which they are to live and work and play, their task is enhanced by the companionship of a common cause and by the shared labor and expectation it involves. They sing work songs whose cadence and rhythm lighten the load and cheer the heart. The same is true of the complex and delicate enterprise of building a good society and thereby fashioning the organic life of a whole whose living parts are the human lives within it.

Strangely enough the very difficulties of carrying forward any enterprise may contribute to the joy of success. When a desired object fills the imagination the effort to secure it enhances its value. The wayfarer traveling to a far destination pictures to

himself the end of the journey, the treasures he is to find, the rest and release he will feel, and the satisfaction of danger and fatigue safely past. If he is delayed by accident, detours, fatigue, or mistakes, yet presses on to his goal, interest and expectation mount higher and higher, eliciting all resources of strength and wit. Emotional tension grows with every interruption and contributes to the exaltation of the final victory. "These are they who have come up through great tribulation" is the triumphant salutation for all who reach the gates of the city of their dreams. Blessedness is their reward. They rest in perfect peace.

Such blessedness and peace spring from the life of action, from the effort to win a goal. It is because religion is concerned with the fulfillment of urgent desire for the greatest good that it yields the highest happiness. The lesser goods afford corresponding satisfactions. The pursuit of pleasure, of riches, of fame, may give some delights but all the wisdom of the wise gives warning that these delights deceive and fade when made the chief end of man. Only an objective inclusive enough to satisfy all the desires of the heart,—wisdom, beauty, and love—is adequate to sustain entire devotion of all the powers of man and guarantee their fulfillment.

There are two kinds of fulfillment. One is the actual realization of our hopes in the realistic scene. The other is the imaginative anticipatory satisfaction of desire. The two go together. Life flows on in a ceaseless stream. Moments of accomplishment gather into themselves the meaning and wealth of the labors by which they have been attained. But those moments are also enriched by the foretaste and promise of greater bliss yet to be. The future is itself within the present and is enjoyed in imagination as already realized. It is by a certain blindness to this fact that people often misjudge the early Christians who being unable to make the kingdom of heaven immediately actual on the earth yet lived in their thought and feeling as even here



possessing it. It was their comfort in persecution, their peace that passed all understanding.

The urgency to fulfill the great social vision of religion gathers to itself the best known means for its achievement. When it is assumed that an authoritative revelation has been given to guide mortals to this goal devout hearts seek to obey it implicitly. But when it is seen that men must be co-workers together with God in the plans and methods they employ to attain a better state, thought and invention are called into play. Old ideas are criticized and new experiments are made. Then the same zest and enthusiasm attend inquiry and discovery as once arose from blind obedience, and fidelity to increasing knowledge becomes a religious virtue. Science and wisdom are consecrated to the great adventure and a mystical quality permeates the quest for the good life. Social reforms inspired by good will and knowledge take on a religious character and contribute to a new sense of growth and power. Hampering customs and outworn traditions fall away and a larger freedom expands all the horizons of life.

Modern religion, reinforced by "sweet reasonableness," moves in profounder depth and awakens more realistic hopes for the realization of a social order pervaded by the spirit of love and brotherhood. Thus the religious man moves toward a more intimate participation in the life of nature and of God and thrills with the assurance of more adequate realization of that fullness and harmony of life which is the sense of oneness with the divine.

### Ceremonial Celebration

Religion is further distinguished by ceremonials and rituals which dramatize the quest, the comradeship, and the mystic wholeness of the higher life. Ceremonials are natural to all men and they occur in all cultures with reference to small and great affairs. Birthdays and wedding days are celebrated in the family. National holidays recall beginnings and significant events. Colleges and



clubs review their history in similar manner. The spirit of poetry and song awaken on these occasions. Stories and legends are recited, and the great personalities of their traditions live again in words and deeds.

Churches cultivate their intimate life and their ideal significance in the same way. They, too, have their local color and personal histories. But churches have also a larger reference and a more urgent life than other organizations. Their appeal is universal and their cause concerns infinite and eternal values. In them every individual is of measureless worth and is called upon to play his part in scenes whose setting and consequences are vast and mystical. The stage and action are projected on that scale of importance which each life attributes to itself in its own inner feeling. What will a man give in exchange for his life? What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his life?

The religion of Jesus took man at his own estimate of himself and called upon him to live seriously in that role. He asserted that each one is a child of God, and therefore should live as a divine being. In that role of the ideal self he abhors that which is evil and clings to that which is good. He loves his neighbor without limit, even if the neighbor is his enemy. He forgives like God without counting offenses. He does not regard this as a surrender to evil but believes that it is the conquest and the destruction of evil. Because Jesus lived a life of such magnitude and spirit, and went to a cruel death in loyalty to it, the world still celebrates his magnanimity and heroism. The proper mood for the celebration of the Mass or Communion—which is the great drama of Christianity—is a mood of triumphant power and unfaltering faith in the infinite love of the heart.

It is these infinite dimensions of aspiration and faith that religion displays in its symbolism. Nothing remains commonplace in its light. The most naive and the most refined religions celebrate man's life in ceremonials framed with the infinities



of heaven and hell. They move within traditions of a mysterious origin and a marvelous destiny. It is the pathetic history of religion that its drama too easily becomes separated from actual life and creates a dream world of fantasy and sentiment, but it is constantly recalled by the hard facts of life and by its own self criticism to its realistic participation in the actual world. Over against the Pharisee stands the Publican. Lazarus is at the door of Dives. Martha is sister to Mary. Judas attends Jesus. Every soul is more or less divided within itself. That which it would not, it does; and that which it would, it does not. Yet in spite of all failure life will not rest in defeat but returns evermore to renewal of hope. Religion does not hesitate to recognize the evils of life, nor the purgatories and sufferings necessary to assuage them. It sets a light above all darkness and sounds a cry of victory over every defeat.

Religion gains a more realistic and objective symbolization of its spirit and function when it is seen in its social and communal character. In early religions the ceremonials dramatized the life of the group especially as it rose to its greatest tensions in crises involving the common welfare. The ceremonials were expressions of joy and elation in expansive and life-assuring events, and in the sense of protection against the calamities of fate. The birth of children, the initiation of boys, the marriage of youth, the gathering of harvests, meant new strength and vitality. The natural emotional reactions embodied themselves in celebrations, and the repetition of these events fixed the habits and customs upon all societies of mankind. In similar manner ceremonials grew up in efforts to ward off the calamities of pestilence, war, and other tragic ills. Where religion is identified with these communal events it gains in dimension and significance. The individual is lifted out of merely subjective states and made to feel himself part of a greater and more enduring life.

Ceremonial symbols embody the long memory of generations. They present to the eye and ear of

living man the old persistent patterns of the spiritual aspirations and achievements of the race. In these symbols the meanings and values of life are objectified and given permanence. To them men may return again and again to renew their loyalties and idealisms, to strengthen their courage and to keep their bearings in the midst of distractions and the temptations of wayside paths of dalliance. Architecture, monuments, statues, paintings, literature, music, and most of all the drama, are the symbols in which religious action and feeling are embodied. In them the past is made significant for the present and the future. Through them the souls of men are drawn into oneness with great spiritual forces and made to share in the ineffable life of God.

Like the treasures of learning and art religious symbols must be cultivated anew by each generation. Unless supported by sympathetic reenactment and understanding they wither and fade and the values they carry are lost. Painful evidence of this may be seen in the present tendency, through fascination with whatever is modern and novel, to undervalue and neglect the familiar and traditional. The college youth today know less of the Bible in either its literary or historical aspects. They have less appreciation for the religious significance of great art and music. They are careless of the profounder meaning of religious services.

Doubtless changes in cultures inevitably destroy some symbols because they no longer justify themselves to the growing mind of enlightened men, but this makes it all the more necessary that new ceremonial symbols shall be developed to make operative a vital religious faith. The hymn books of the churches illustrate the growth which slowly transforms the rituals of religion. New hymnals, and new editions of old ones, quietly put aside outworn words and tunes and introduce new poetry and music better suited to the needs of people educated in scientific ideas and in social idealism. If prayers were as readily available they would show the same tendencies. Religious leaders are eagerly seeking



an "enrichment of worship" for they know how essential it is to a commanding and elevating religious life.